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MANAGEMENT COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

U. S. Department of Agriculture

A summary of significant events of
interest to USDA management

Issue #57
March 21, 1977

LIMITATION ON HIRING AND REVISION OF EMPLOYEE CEILINGS.....Pursuant to a Presidential Memorandum and OMB Bulletin 77-7, a Secretary's Memorandum dated March 9 has been issued requiring each Agency to establish controls limiting the number of appointments to full-time positions to not more than 75 percent of the number of vacancies occurring after February 28, 1977 (i.e. Agency full-time permanent hiring is restricted to on-board strength as of February 28, 1977, less 25 percent of vacancies occurring thereafter). This limitation applied to all new hires and transfers between the Department and other Executive Branch Agencies. To preserve continuity of Departmental operations, some exemptions are permitted. These are listed in the Secretary's Memorandum. The hiring limitations will continue until new employment ceilings have been established by OMB by early April. Any further curtailment in hiring will depend on the need to comply with the new employment ceilings. (Contact: Joe Logan, OP, ext. 77131)

APPOINTMENTS IN THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY.....The Senate, on March 15 confirmed the nomination of Mr. John C. White to be Deputy Secretary; he was sworn in on March 17. The appointment of Ms. Carol Tucker Foreman as Assistant Secretary for Food and Consumer Services is awaiting confirmation. Mr. Howard W. Hjort has been appointed Director of Agricultural Economics. Mr. Lee C. Corcoran has been appointed Executive Assistant to the Secretary. (Contact: Phyllis Mowery, OP, ext. 77131)

EXECUTIVE ORIENTATION PACKAGE.....The Executive Orientation sound and slide show developed by OP may now be purchased by agencies and staff offices. The cost will be \$50 each. This package, as described in the February 7 issue of the Management Council Newsletter, identifies USDA's missions, cites sample program achievements by agencies under each mission and defines the role of each Assistant Secretary. In 20 minutes it provides an effective overview of what USDA is all about. (Contact: Tom Gill, OP, ext. 74258)

USDA EEO COMMITTEE.....The USDA EEO Committee has begun work on several projects: developing a method for computing EEO program costs, designing a new EEO poster, studying methods of developing a Department-wide recruiting program for the Cooperative Education Program, and conducting a survey of the participation of women and minorities in training and development programs. Future projects will cover the EEO complaint system, statistics and organizational structure. (Contact: Gloria Torres, OP, ext. 72973)

PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT EVALUATION (PME).....PME activity in the Department is making progress. So far this fiscal year the Office of Personnel has conducted one on-site PME review and the Agencies' Headquarters personnel have conducted another 30. They have also participated in three Civil Service Commission reviews. In addition, 37 reviews have been conducted below the Headquarters level. These reviews are designed to enhance mission accomplishment through improving personnel management practices within USDA, and to ensure compliance with the letter and spirit of the laws, regulations, and public policies affecting personnel.

Reviews conducted since October 1 indicate opportunities for improvement exist in the following areas: EEO; Merit System Administration; Personnel Management Evaluation; Safety; Administration of Summer Employment Programs; Training, especially determining the need and source and evaluating its effectiveness; and Fair Labor Standards Act Compliance. (Contact: Gloria Torres, OP, ext. 72973)

FAIR HOUSING BROCHURE.....The Office of Equal Opportunity has prepared and distributed "Your Right to Fair Housing," a brochure explaining employee rights to equal housing opportunity. Distribution has been made to all USDA employees through equal housing opportunity officers. Copies will also be distributed to all new employees. (Contact: William C. Payne, OEO, ext. 74806)

DEPARTMENTAL DATA COMMUNICATIONS STUDY.....On March 15, Resource Exchange Program members were briefed on Phase 1 of the Departmental Data Communications Study conducted by Network Analysis Corporation. A similar briefing is scheduled for the ADP Policy Advisory Board on March 23. (Contact: H.W. Meetze, ADS, ext. 76275)

SECURITY SYSTEM IN ADMINISTRATION BUILDING.....Until further notice, visitors to the Administration Building will not be required to sign in and out. They will, however, still be required to show some form of identification before entering. (Contact: William Gould, OI, ext. 76901)

KCCC/SLCC PROCUREMENT.....A delegation of procurement authority for the KCCC/SLCC competitive procurement is expected by March 29 from GSA. (Contact: R. Long, ADS, ext. 74789)

SPACE CONTRACT PROTOTYPAL DESIGN.....The design of the prototypal area is rapidly nearing completion. On March 17 Hunter/Miller & Associates presented the design to the Management Council. The proposed program provides an innovative, efficient and cost effective alternative to conventional space layout schemes in the South Building as well as a modified "system" approach in selecting furniture and furnishings. (Contact: Al Cauley, OO, ext. 72815)

FISCAL YEAR 1978 BUDGET.....The Senate Agriculture and Forestry Committee submitted to the House Budget Committee its recommendations regarding the development of the First Concurrent Resolution for the FY 78 budget. Committee recommendations above the amounts requested in President Carter's budget are as follows:

	<u>Budget Authority</u> (in thousands)	<u>Outlays</u>
Agricultural Research Service	\$ 96,400	\$ 88,150
Farmers Home Administration	48,316	35,200
Extension Service	63,500	63,500
Farmer Cooperative Service	700	700
Animal and Plant Health Insp. Service	45,000	37,480
Cooperative State Research Service	45,500	44,500
Foreign Agricultural Service	4,188	4,188
Soil Conservation Service	89,554	45,406
Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service	215,000	175,000
Forest Service	303,399	188,194
Office of the Inspector General	300	300
Food and Nutrition Service	164,756	194,000
Technical Adjustments Food and Nutrition	492,725	--
Total Net Increase	<u>\$1,569,338</u>	<u>\$876,618</u>

(Contact: Bob Sherman, OMF, ext. 76176)

FY 1977 SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS BILL.....This Bill was passed on March 16 and includes \$1,867,916,000 for USDA. This is \$79,989,000 more than that of the House Appropriations Committee and includes:
 ...\$14,650,000 for the Youth Conservation Corps
 ...\$33,339,000 to rehabilitate recreation facilities of the Forest Service
 ...\$32,000,000 for acceleration of timber production in national forests
 The Senate Appropriations Committee plans to submit their report on the bill to the Senate during the week of March 21. (Contact: Bob Sherman, OMF, ext. 76176)

DISPOSITION OF OFFICIAL RECORDS.....Recently it has come to the attention of the National Archives and Records Service that records created during the conduct of official government business may have been removed from the custody of the creating agency by departing officials. In addition, Congressman Brooks, Chairman of the House Committee on Government Operations, has expressed a strong interest in this subject.

GSA Bulletin FPMR B-65 provides guidelines for distinguishing between personal papers and official records. Employees should be aware of these restrictions and care should be taken to assure that official records are being maintained in accordance with present legal requirements.
 (Contact: Henry Arnold, OMF, ext. 75725)

NATIONAL FINANCE CENTER NEWS.....

...On-Line Inquiry Control - The NFC is now implementing an on-line inquiry control system which will provide supervisors with the current status of inquiries being handled. This system will also provide the status of inquiries previously handled or currently being researched by other clerks. Duplication of effort between inquiry personnel will be eliminated.

This on-line system replaces a card file containing statistical data related to inquiries handled. Previously, data was processed at the close of each month to provide hard copy reports. In some cases, this meant delays of up to six weeks in responding to inquiries.

...Submission of Payroll Documents - The percentage of employees paid on the primary schedule through the first four pay periods of 1977 shows a substantial increase over 1976. An average of 97.7% of all employees were paid on the primary schedule for these 4 pay periods compared to 95.9% for 1976. This improvement is attributed to operational improvements such as in-house data preparation of T&A's and personnel documents, as well as to the special effort made in accelerating the submission of T&A's from pay period 3.

...Payroll/Personnel System Conversion - A plan of action on this conversion has been established for accomplishing the objectives of recommending an approach for converting from second to third generation equipment and designing a conversion plan. The project team has a goal of September 1 for completion.

...Excessive Travel Advances - Notices identifying employees having excess travel advances have been sent to agency personnel offices. Demand letters were sent to these employees in February. Payroll deductions will be made from pay period 7 salary checks for those employees who have not liquidated their excess advances by that time.

REGULATORY IMPACT PROVISION OF LEGISLATIVE REPORTS.....The Senate agreed on February 4 to a committee reorganization plan (S. Res. 4) which requires that each committee report contain an evaluation of the regulatory impact which would be incurred in carrying out the subject measure. The Director of OMB has expressed the Administration's support for this provision. OMB is now preparing guidelines that Executive Departments can use in meeting this requirement. (Contact Al Duran, OMF, ext. 74654)

OMB CIRCULAR A-113(PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION OF MANAGEMENT PLANS)OMB has repealed the requirement for the Department to report quarterly on progress in accomplishing the items specified in the President's Management Plan. However, all requirements for reporting progress by agencies to the Department on Plan items remain in effect. (Contact: Jim Olmes, OMF, ext. 73226)